

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Lee County update for Wednesday, Sept. 25, regarding Tropical Storm Helene**

Fort Myers, FL, Sept. 25, 2024 – Lee County Government has the following updates related to operations and preparations for Tropical Storm Helene, which is anticipated to bring inclement weather to residents tonight and throughout Thursday.

Lee County offices will be closed Thursday. Employees working in emergency roles will continue in their duties.

**Emergency Management / Public Safety:**

- The Emergency Operations Center has been activated to a Level 2, which is a partial activation.
- Staff continue to work closely with state and federal partners, including the Florida Division of Emergency Management, the National Weather Service, the National Hurricane Center and local partners.
- The State of Local Emergency approved by the Lee Board of County Commissioners is in effect.
- The Emergency Information Hotline (EIHL) is active. Call United Way 211 by dialing 2-1-1 or (239) 433-3900 for non-urgent matters including sandbag distribution sites, closures, and real-time updates, Call 9-1-1 for urgent or life-threatening matters.
- No hurricane shelters are open.
- Lee County announced the opening of two Safe Havens at 3 p.m. today. They are a safe place for anyone who does not feel secure in their housing situation and who perhaps does not have a friend's home or a family member's home to go to. The two Safe Havens will remain open tomorrow as Lee County monitors the conditions. They will be located at two county sites:
  - North Fort Myers Recreation Center, 2000 North Recreation Park Way, North Fort Myers, FL, 22903
  - Estero Recreation Center, 9200 Corkscrew Palms Blvd., Estero, FL, 33928
- LeeTran will continue to run routes 140, 240, 600, 590, 595 and 60 until 10 p.m. to assist people who wish to go to a Safe Haven location at the North Fort Myers Recreation Center or the Estero Recreation Center.
- The Route 60 will provide service to the Estero Recreation Center starting at approximately 5 p.m.
- The Route 590 will provide service to the North Fort Myers Library/Recreation Center throughout the day.
- LeeTran will have a vehicle available at the Pine Island Fire Station to help transport people needing to reach the Safe Haven at North Fort Myers Recreation Center by utilizing the route 590 at Merchants Crossing in North Fort Myers.

**Department of Community Development**

- The Department of Community Development asks that any unincorporated Lee County Residents with water intrusion in their homes, or those residing in the Special Flood Hazard Area with wind damage, send an email to [FIRMinfo@leegov.com](mailto:FIRMinfo@leegov.com) for assistance with permit requirements and resources. Residents also can visit [www.leegov.com/dcd/BldPermitServ/disaster-recovery](http://www.leegov.com/dcd/BldPermitServ/disaster-recovery) for information.

**Solid Waste:**

- Lee County will suspend residential garbage, yard waste and recycling collection on Thursday due to winds anticipated from the storm.
- Regular household collections will be delayed by one day for the remainder of the week. Thursday's collections will be picked up Friday, and Friday's collections will be picked up Saturday. Collections will resume as normal on Monday, Sept. 30.
- The county asks residents to please remove anything outside their homes that could blow away during the storm, and remove from the curb, garbage cans, lids and recycle carts. Please store them inside.
- All Lee County disposal facilities will be open regular hours on Friday and extended hours on Saturday.

**LeeTran / Lee County Transit:**

- Regular, fixed-route bus route service will be suspended at 7 p.m. today, except for Safe Haven operations previously noted. Services will not resume until Friday.
- LeeTran will not have any services on Thursday, Sept. 26, due to expected storm conditions.
- Monitor LeeTran social media for specific rider alerts.
- LeeTran will suspend fares as of 5 p.m. today.

**Library System**

- All library branches will be closed Thursday.
- Due dates and hold pickup dates will be extended until Monday.

**Parks & Recreation**

- All Lee County Parks & Recreation sites will be closed Thursday.
- Lee County pools will close at 3 p.m. today and remain closed Thursday.
- Portable restroom trailers at Lynn Hall Park, Crescent Beach Family Park and Bowditch Point Park will be or have been removed until the storm passes north.
- With the opening of North Fort Myers Recreation Center and Estero Recreation Center as Safe Havens today, regular facility operations will close at 3 p.m. today. These centers will remain closed on Thursday, Sept. 26, and will re-open on Friday, Sept. 27.
- Veterans Park Recreation Center and Wa-Ke Hatchee Recreation Center will close at 6 p.m. today, following the end of the Club Rec program. These centers will remain closed on Thursday, Sept. 26, and will re-open on Friday, Sept. 27.

**Department of Transportation**

- Do not drive into flooded roadways. Turn around.
- DOT is coordinating with the Florida Department of Transportation on the temporary signals at the Little Pine Island Bridge, and staff will be prepared to check that alternating signal immediately after the weather clears;
- Be aware that after the storm passes – depending on the severity of the wind – motorists should use caution at all intersections in case traffic signals are not functioning.
- DOT continues to inspect drainage structures in lower-lying areas to make sure they are flowing freely.
- DOT is coordinating with Department of Natural Resources on weir gate operations to provide space for water to stage, where appropriate.

**Natural Resources**

- Staff is monitoring and evaluating hydrologic conditions from the network of sensors and gauges including groundwater levels, stream level and rainfall to assist in determining areas most vulnerable to flooding.

- Staff is working with South Florida Water Management District to clean creeks and streams of exotic and obstructing vegetation, recognizing in many cases they serve as the major watercourses for flood relief.
- Staff is documenting pre-storm conditions along critically eroded beaches.

#### **Human & Veteran Services**

- Staff is working with partners such as Salvation Army on sheltering capacity for people experiencing homelessness during the storm.

#### **General**

Members of the community should continue to take action to stay informed:

- Monitor reputable local media outlets, the National Weather Service-Tampa, and the National Hurricane Center.
- Follow Lee County Government and Lee County Public Safety on social media, including Facebook, YouTube, X and LinkedIn.
- Sign up for AlertLee and download the LeePrepares app from Google Play or the App Store.

Have a plan and prepare for the effects of weather:

- Review your Family Emergency Plan and an Emergency Supply Kit.
- Prepare your home, secure loose items and ensure you have what you need on hand as you continue to monitor the tropics.

Know your home and your evacuation zone. Have a plan in place to leave, if need be, to a friend's or family member's house or a community outside the area.

To receive updates from Lee County Government, sign up for the newsletter here: [www.leegov.com/resources/newsletters](http://www.leegov.com/resources/newsletters). Follow Lee County Government on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/leecountyflbocc](http://www.facebook.com/leecountyflbocc).